

### ASSIGNMENT THREE

This assignment has two parts.

#### PART ONE

The course emphasizes the sequence of causalities in history from an economic point of view and the battle of Crécy is a perfect test. The assignment requires to take details of the account by Froissart as illustration of that process. In some sense, the battle was not fought in a later afternoon in August of 1346 but in the preparation during the previous 70 years. Edward I did not prepare for Crécy, but he initiated changes and a chain of effects that led, with some exogenous impulse to the battle and its outcome. The questions about the outcome are more interesting if they are presented from a counterfactual point of view. They should not be, what would have happen if the sun had not been behind the English, if there had been no shower that afternoon, or especially, if the French had waited for one night. The questions should be, why did the king of France not listen to his scouts, what was the additional impact of the sun and the shower in the context of the battle, context that had been prepared since Edward I. The purpose of the assignment is not to go through entire history of the evolutions of the feudal dues in England and France, respectively. The evolutions are supposed to be known. We focus on the events of the day,

Froissart was nine years old at the time of the battle. He clearly talked with people who has first-hand knowledge of the battle. He provides a number of tale telling details.

Remember first that the battle took place at the end of a *chevauchée*, an expedition that first required top of the art preparation in England. Some of food would be taken on the field, but armaments, bows, arrows, etc... and to be carefully stored and inventoried. There are records about that. One could not rely on the good will of counts and dukes who would have the delegation to raise their own troops, as was the case in the feudal system on the continent. Money and a paid army was essential. That setting had been prepared by Edward I (see the readings) and built upon by Edward III (readings). Such an expedition required a certain level of coordination with people obeying to central command. Think of D-day landing, obviously on a much smaller scale...

On the English side, as many of you have commented upon, Edward III projects the figure of a war lord who is close to his troops. That does not seem to be propaganda by Froissart. After two months of campaigning and successful pillaging together, bonds must have been reinforced.

*On the Friday, as I said before, the king of England lay in the fields, for the country was plentiful of wines and other victual, and if need had been, they had provision following in carts and other carriages. That night the king made a supper to all his chief lords of his host and made them good cheer; and when they were all departed to take their rest, then the king entered into his oratory and kneeled down before the altar, praying God devoutly, that if he fought the next day, that he might achieve the journey to his honour: then about midnight he laid him down to rest, and in the morning he rose betimes and heard mass, and the prince his son with him, and the most part of his company were confessed and houselled; and after the*

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*mass said, he commanded every man to be armed and to draw to the field to the same place before appointed. Then the king caused a park to be made by the wood side behind his host, and there was set all carts and carriages, and within the park were all their horses, for every man was afoot; and into this park there was but one entry.*

An important detail: “but one entry” that presumably, was controlled. There are two points here. First, it is obviously less difficult to exert control over an army that is afoot than over very mobile soldiers. Second, no one could escape by taking his own horse. All men on foot, including the king’s son. To put the horses aside was another way of “burning your vessels”, a device used by Achilles in the siege of Troy. Julius Caesar had also put the horses aside for some critical battles.

*Then he ordained three battles: in the first was the young prince of Wales, with him the earl of Warwick and Oxford, the lord Godfrey of Harcourt, sir Raynold Cobham, sir Thomas Holland, the lord Stafford, the lord of Mohun, the lord Delaware, sir John Chandos, sir Bartholomew de Burghersh, sir Robert Nevill, the lord Thomas Clifford, the lord Bourchier, the lord de Latimer, and divers other knights and squires that I cannot name: they were an eight hundred men of arms and two thousand archers, and a thousand of other with the Welshmen: every lord drew to the field appointed under his own banner and pennon. In the second battle was the earl of Northampton, the earl of Arundel, the lord Ros, the lord Lucy, the lord Willoughby, the lord Basset, the lord of Saint-Aubin, sir Louis Tufton, the lord of Multon, the lord Lascelles and divers other, about an eight hundred men of arms and twelve hundred archers. The third battle had the king: he had seven hundred men of arms and two thousand archers. Then the king leapt on a hobby, with a white rod in his hand, one of his marshals on the one hand and the other on the other hand: he rode from rank to rank desiring every man to take heed that day to his right and honour. He spake it so sweetly and with so good countenance and merry cheer, that all such as were discomfited took courage in the seeing and hearing of him. And when he had thus visited all his battles, it was then nine of the day: then he caused every man to eat and drink a little, and so they did at their leisure. And afterward they ordered again their battles: then every man lay down on the earth and by him his salet and bow, to be the more fresher when their enemies should come.*

*This Saturday the French king rose betimes and heard mass in Abbeville in his lodging in the abbey of Saint Peter, and he departed after the sun-rising. When he was out of the town two leagues, approaching toward his enemies, some of his lords said to him: 'Sir, it were good that ye ordered your battles, and let all your footmen pass somewhat on before, that they be not troubled with the horsemen.' Then the king sent four knights, the Moine [of] Bazeilles, the lord of Noyers, the lord of Beaujeu and the lord d'Aubigny to ride to aview the English host; and so they rode so near that they might well see part of their dealing. The Englishmen saw them well and knew well how they were come thither to aview them: they let them alone and made no countenance toward them, and let them return as they came. And when the French king saw these four knights return again, he tarried till they came to him and said: 'Sirs, what tidings?' These four knights each of them looked on other, for there was none would speak before his*

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*companion; finally the king said to [the] Moine, who pertained to the king of Bohemia and had done in his days so much, that he was reputed for one of the valiantest knights of the world: 'Sir, speak you.' Then he said: 'Sir, I shall speak, sith it pleaseth you, under the correction of my fellows. Sir, we have ridden and seen the behaving of your enemies: know ye for truth they are rested in three battles abiding for you. Sir, I will counsel you as for my part, saving your displeasure, that you and all your company rest here and lodge for this night: for or they that be behind of your company be come hither, and or your battles be set in good order, it will be very late, and your people be weary and out of array, and ye shall find your enemies fresh and ready to receive you. Early in the morning ye may order your battles at more leisure and advise your enemies at more deliberation, and to regard well what way ye will assail them; for, sir, surely they will abide you.'*

Both kings pray devoutly the same God before the battle. The scouting action of the king of France is perfectly reasonable. Note that the scouts did not spur any action from the English side. That could have disrupted the battle order of the English.

*Then the king commanded that it should be so done. Then his two marshals one rode before, another behind, saying to every banner: 'Tarry and abide here in the name of God and Saint Denis.'*

“Tarry” means wait. Sensible decision by the king.

*They that were foremost tarried, but they that were behind would not tarry, but rode forth, and said how they would in no wise abide till they were as far forward as the foremost:*

Clearly a lack of discipline. Also, this failure of discipline was facilitated by the order of a marching army (in contrast with an army standing on a set position). Communications were difficult at the time (a major problem, if not *the* main problem, in all the battles). Different groups did not seem to have a direct link with a central command. In addition, why did they want to reach the first line? To some extent because they were not paid but provided direct “labor services”. The payoff of these services depended on what was gained on the battlefield, equipment of the killed, and most of all, the ransoms for the prisoners. Different groups for the army in fact competed for these gains.

*and when they before saw them come on behind, then they rode forward again, so that the king nor his marshals could not rule them. So they rode without order or good array, till they came in sight of their enemies:*

As mentioned before, the main task in the battle was crowd management, or at least crowd control. When that control is even partially lost, the crowd has its own dynamics and reestablishing the control may be nearly impossible.

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*as soon as the foremost saw them, they reculed then aback without good array, whereof they behind had marvel and were abashed, and thought that the foremost company had been fighting.*

Note how a marching army, in a column, is not set for battle. The ones behind have no way to see what is ahead and make their decisions without coordination.

*Then they might have had leisure and room to have gone forward, if they had list: some went forth and some abode still. The commons, of whom all the ways between Abbeville and Cressy were full, when they saw that they were near to their enemies, they took their swords and cried: 'Down with them! let us slay them all.' There is no man, though he were present at the journey, that could imagine or shew the truth of the evil order that was among the French party, and yet they were a marvellous great number.*

More evidence about the previous comment.

*That I write in this book I learned it specially of the Englishmen, who well beheld their dealing; and also certain knights of sir John of Hainault's, who was always about king Philip, shewed me as they knew.*

As stated before Froissart could talk to eye witnesses.

*The Englishmen, who were in three battles lying on the ground to rest them, as soon as they saw the Frenchmen approach, they rose upon their feet fair and easily without any haste and arranged their battles. The first, which was the prince's battle, the archers there stood in manner of a herse and the men of arms in the bottom of the battle. The earl of Northampton and the earl of Arundel with the second battle were on a wing in good order, ready to comfort the prince's battle, if need were.*

That is expected from the previous comments.

*The lords and knights of France came not to the assembly together in good order, for some came before and some came after in such haste and evil order, that one of them did trouble another. When the French king saw the Englishmen, his blood changed, and said to his marshals: 'Make the Genoways go on before and begin the battle in the name of God and Saint Denis.' There were of the Genoways cross-bows about a fifteen thousand,*

*[Note: Villani, a very good authority on the subject, says 6000, brought from the ships at Harfleur.]*

To the previous discussion one may add the following. The feudal system in France, in order to be efficient required some reinforcement to avoid shirking (that is an economist's viewpoint). The code of honor and the sense of bravura provided such a support. Passion was perhaps more developed. (Although when your life is at stake, passion is on all sides). And when this

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individual passion is an essential fire, the attack is clearly a more proper setting than the defense. The French system does not seem to have been very good at defending a position, a task that requires perhaps more coordination.

*But they were so weary of going afoot that day a six leagues armed with their cross-bows, that they said to their constables: 'We be not well ordered to fight this day, for we be not in the case to do any great deed of arms: we have more need of rest.' These words came to the earl of Alencon, who said: 'A man is well at ease to be charged with such a sort of rascals, to be faint and fail now at most need.' Also the same season there fell a great rain and a flash of lightning with a terrible thunder, and before the rain there came flying over both battles a great number of crows for fear of the tempest coming.*

More about the honor and the glory versus the cold thinking of paid men who advise the reasonable path.

*Then anon the air began to wax clear, and the sun to shine fair and bright, the which was right in the Frenchmen's eyen and on the Englishmen's backs.*

The shower is one of these random shocks that affect a course of events that is already on a wrong path. (Likewise, most airline accidents have multiple causes). The sun behind the English has two causes. Edward I knew where the French would be on the battlefield. (Remember that a marching army that is not trained together has the same mobility as a giant tanker at full speed). But he could not be sure that the French would attack on the same day. In that case, the late afternoon sun was indeed a strong ally for the English. Think of the difference when people play a game of football or tennis. Or think of the standard evasion technique in the air dogfights in WW II, fly toward the sun. Now think of the clouds of arrows that fell from the sun on the French troops, while the English could perfectly see the enemy.

*When the Genoways were assembled together and began to approach, they began to utter cries so loud it was wonderful. They did this to abash the Englishmen, but the Englishmen stood still and stirred not for all that: then the Genoese again the second time made another cry, and stepped forward a little, and the Englishmen removed not one foot: thirdly, again they leapt and cried, and went forth till they came within shot; then they shot fiercely with their cross-bows.*

Perfect discipline on the English side.

*Then the English archers stept forth one pace and let fly their arrows so wholly [together] and so thick, that it seemed snow.*

Famous line.

*When the Genoese felt the arrows piercing through heads, arms and breasts, many of them cast down their cross-bows and did cut their strings and returned discomfited. When the French*

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*king saw them fly away, he said: 'Slay these rascals, for they shall let and trouble us without reason.' Then ye should have seen the men of arms dash in among them and killed a great number of them:*

The king is overtaken by his senses. In addition, one can feel how the chivalry that is riding for honor and glory, has only contempt for these paid mercenaries.

*and ever still the Englishmen shot whereas they saw thickest press; the sharp arrows ran into the men of arms and into their horses, and many fell, horse and men, among the Genoese, and when they were down, they could not stand up again, the press was so thick that one overthrew another.*

One technical detail: at long distance, a few bows are not efficient. They are not accurate. But when a large mass of bows is involved, the precision does not matter. Such an array of archers was the ancestor of the machine-gun.

*And also among the Englishmen there were certain rascals that went afoot with great knives, and they went in among the men of arms, and slew and murdered many as they lay on the ground, both earls, barons, knights and squires, whereof the king of England was after displeased, for he had rather they had been taken prisoners.*

In the heat and passions of the battle. Even on the English side, some lapse of discipline. Think then about the conditions on the French side.

The next paragraphs illustrate the futility of individual heroism when proper conditions were not set.

*The valiant king of Bohemia called Charles of Luxembourg, son to the noble emperor Henry of Luxembourg, for all that he was nigh blind, when he understood the order of the battle, he said to them about him: 'Where is the lord Charles my son?' His men said: 'Sir, we cannot tell; we think he be fighting.' Then he said: 'Sirs, ye are my men, my companions and friends in this journey: I require you bring me so far forward, that I may strike one stroke with my sword.' They said they would do his commandment, and to the intent that they should not lose him in the press, they tied all their reins of their bridles each to other and set the king before to accomplish his desire, and so they went on their enemies. The lord Charles of Bohemia his son, who wrote himself king of Almaine and bare the arms, he came in good order to the battle; but when he saw that the matter went awry on their party, he departed, I cannot tell you which way. The king his father was so far forward that he strake a stroke with his sword, yea and more than four, and fought valiantly and so did his company; and they adventured themselves so forward, that they were there all slain, and the next day they were found in the place about the king, and all their horses tied each to other.*

*The earl of Alencon came to the battle right ordinally and fought with the Englishmen, and the earl of Flanders also on his part. These two lords with their companies coasted the English archers and came to the prince's battle, and there fought valiantly long. The French king*

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*would fain have come thither, when he saw their banners, but there was a great hedge of archers before him. The same day the French king had given a great black courser to sir John of Hainault, and he made the lord Tierry of Senzeille to ride on him and to bear his banner. The same horse took the bridle in the teeth and brought him through all the curroures of the Englishmen, and as he would have returned again, he fell in a great dike and was sore hurt, and had been there dead, an his page had not been, who followed him through all the battles and saw where his master lay in the dike, and had none other let but for his horse, for the Englishmen would not issue out of their battle for taking of any prisoner. Then the page alighted and relieved his master: then he went not back again the same way that they came, there was too many in his way.*

*This battle between Broye and Cressy this Saturday was right cruel and fell, and many a feat of arms done that came not to my knowledge. In the falling night divers knights and squires lost their masters, and sometime came on the Englishmen, who received them in such wise that they were ever nigh slain; for there was none taken to mercy nor to ransom, for so the Englishmen were determined.*

*In the morning*

*[Note: The text has suffered by omissions. What Froissart says is that if the battle had begun in the morning, it might have gone better for the French, and then he instances the exploits of those who broke through the archers. The battle did not begin till four o'clock in the afternoon.]*

*the day of the battle certain Frenchmen and Almaines perforce opened the archers of the prince's battle and came and fought with the men of arms hand to hand. Then the second battle of the Englishmen came to succour the prince's battle, the which was time, for they had as then much ado; and they with the prince sent a messenger to the king, who was on a little windmill hill. Then the knight said to the king: 'Sir, the earl of Warwick and the earl of Oxford, sir Raynold Cobham and other, such as be about the prince, your son, are fiercely fought withal and are sore handled; wherefore they desire you that you and your battle will come and aid them; for if the Frenchmen increase, as they doubt they will, your son and they shall have much ado.' Then the king said: 'Is my son dead or hurt or on the earth felled?' 'No, sir,' quoth the knight, 'but he is hardly matched; wherefore he hath need of your aid.' 'Well" said the king, 'return to him and to them that sent you hither, and say to them that they send no more to me for any adventure that falleth, as long as my son is alive: and also say to them that they suffer him this day to win his spurs;*

*for if God be pleased, I will this journey be his and the honour thereof, and to them that be about him.' Then the knight returned again to them and shewed the king's words, the which greatly encouraged them.*

*Sir Godfrey of Harcourt would gladly that the earl of Harcourt his brother might have been saved; for he heard say by them that saw his banner how that he was there in the field on the French party: but sir Godfrey could not come to him betimes, for he was slain or he could come at him, and so was also the earl of Aumale his nephew. In another place the earl of*

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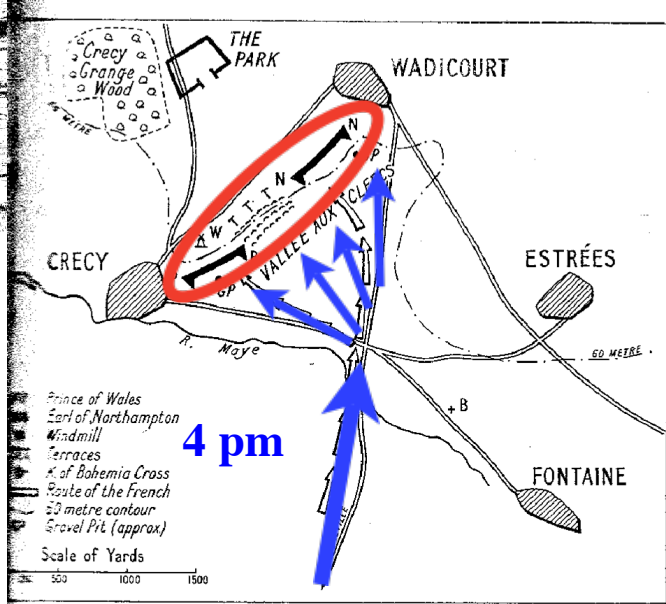
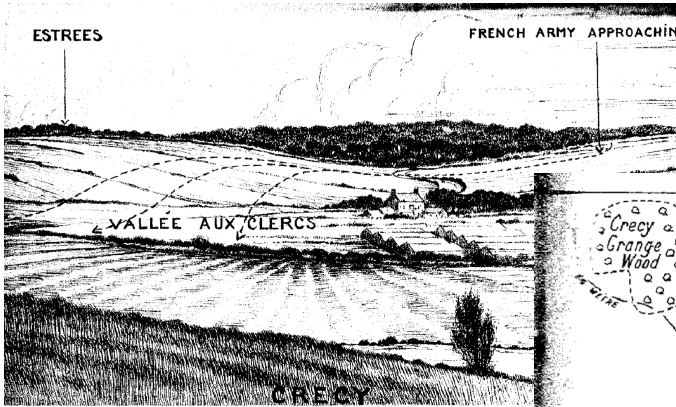
*Alencon and the earl of Flanders fought valiantly, every lord under his own banner; but finally they could not resist against the puissance of the Englishmen, and so there they were also slain, and divers other knights and squires. Also the earl Louis of Blois, nephew to the French king, and the duke of Lorraine fought under their banners, but at last they were closed in among a company of Englishmen and Welshmen, and there were slain for all their prowess. Also there was slain the earl of Auxerre, the earl of Saint-Pol and many other.*

*In the evening the French king, who had left about him no more than a three-score persons, one and other, whereof sir John of Hainault was one, who had remounted once the king, for his horse was slain with an arrow, then he said to the king: 'Sir, depart hence, for it is time; lose not yourself wilfully: if ye have loss at this time, ye shall recover it again another season.' And so he took the king's horse by the bridle and led him away in a manner perforce. Then the king rode till he came to the castle of Broye. The gate was closed, because it was by that time dark: then the king called the captain, who came to the walls and said: 'Who is that calleth there this time of night?' Then the king said: 'Open your gate quickly, for this is the infortunate king of France.' The captain knew then it was the king, and opened the gate and let down the bridge. Then the king entered, and he had with him but five barons, sir John of Hainault, sir Charles of Montmorency, the lord of Beaujeu, the lord d'Aubigny and the lord of Montsault. The king would not tarry there, but drank and departed thence about midnight, and so rode by such guides as knew the country till he came in the morning to Amiens, and there he rested.*

*This Saturday the Englishmen never departed from their battles for chasing of any man, but kept still their field, and ever defended themselves against all such as came to assail them. This battle ended about evensong time.*



English viewpoint



10. BATTLE OF CRECY

## PART TWO

### Assignment

1. Make sure you are familiar with the basic historical facts of the time. The short summary of the battle in Wikipédia is useful but does not address the issues of the assignment.

2. Have a first reading of the account of Froissart, attached at the end of the assignment. In that reading, you may also appreciate the individuals' attitudes and behaviors at the time. I made minor corrections on a text that is in the public domain on the web.

3. Read the introduction to *De Moneta* of Nicolas Oresme. You may complement this information with a look at the Wikipedia note on Nicolas Oresme.

1. Don't be scared or puzzled by the Latin at the beginning. It is just given to remind you that everything scholarly was in Latin at the time (and more or less until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in England and in continental Europe).

2. Read pages 4-7 (Chapter I, II, and part of Chapter III). Comment (about 10 lines) on these in view of what we have seen in this course.

The arguments for money by Oresme, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, are the same as the ones that have been presented in class. He does not have the historical knowledge about the origin of the first coins, but that is not important for the argument. Note the reference (also in other chapters) to Aristotle. His philosophical framework provided the intellectual foundation of the high Middle-Age. In Chapter II, the argument is similar to the one class, but there is an important difference. Silver is used for coins not because gold is too rare. The price of gold is, by and large (one could discuss that), not determined by its used as money. Silver is used because the gold coins with a lower face value would be too small for practical use. The verses by Ovid are lovely and prescient of all the miseries and horrors that have resulted from the search for gold and its use.

The policy of Theodoric makes sense, especially at a time when precious metals had become much more scarce than during the heydays of the Roman Empire. (See course).

Oresme emphasizes that the gold and silver coins should be in precious metals in order to guarantee their values. There is also the implicit argument that for smaller coins the intrinsic value does not matter that much, probably because the cost of making the coin does not make counterfeiting profitable. The value of such a coin is then determined *by tale*, by its value in exchange.

3. Read the end of Chapter III (p. 8). Do you think that Oresme is correct?

This does not seem to be correct. First, we have seen that the densities of gold and silver are very different and that given the value of gold coins, these are used by professionals with means to check.

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There has never been any cheating on gold coins. The rest of the paragraph touches on themes that will be discussed below.

*4. Read Chapters V and VI. Comment on the view of Oresme about the role of the “prince” and the ownership of money (5 to 10 lines, as a non-binding indication).*

Oresme is perfectly clear. Money is a public good that facilitate the exchanges. He did not know the expression “public good”, but that is how we can translate his language in “modern” economics. Money is the property of the people and not of the prince. “Money belongs to the community and to individuals”. Implicit is that there is a distinction between the community and the prince and that the community is not the servant, or worse, the slave, of the prince. The prince is, given his natural position, the one who can provide the public good because his main function is that there has to be an individual who provides that public good for the good of the community and not for his personal good.

*5. Using Chapters XVI, XVII, XXII, XXIII, and your previous answers, under what conditions, according to Oresme should seignorage be either prohibited as a crime or should be allowed?*

The argument of Oresme is perfectly consistent. Given the previous answer, no seignorage per personal enrichment by the prince, but seignorage is allowed when there is an evident necessity for the community. Oresme wrote his treatise in the 1350s when he was in his thirties. There were fresh memories about the large seignorage that after the desaster of Azincourt, financed the recovery of the French army while most of the land was taken by the ennemies (England and Burgundy).

*6. Read Chapter XXIV. Can one say that the economic analysis of money by Oresme provides a basis for the presentation of his view on the role of the “prince” in the middle 14<sup>th</sup> century?*

Yes, the main economic public good at the time was the currency. The view about the role of the prince was derived from philosophical (and also religious) principles. But here we have a practical issue that is clearly defined. On this technical issue, Oresme make a sharp description of the role of the prince whose role is that a coordinator who is fostering the common good and is not using that role to enrich himself.

*7. (optional) Is the second paragraph of Chapter XX (p. 32) correct for a modern economist? Can it be correct for the economy in which Oresme operated?*

The reduction of precious metals in the kingdom is obviously bad for economic prosperity but I do not see how that would change the market value of the precious metals and their outflows.